

Fluency with Change

I'm so tired of hearing the clichés, "Go with the Flow," "Take it in stride," "You'll bounce back like always." The only thing we can count on is death, taxes...and change!

Because change is so pervasive, resiliency is critical to success in all aspects of our lives. Fluency with change is the ability to be at ease or have a sense of confidence in dealing with ambiguous situations. It is the ability to respond to annoying things like deadlines, software changes, traffic delays - and major changes such as job, family, or health issues.

What gets in our way of effectively managing change? Our own expectation of how things 'should' be is challenged by what is really happening. We may agree there is a problem to resolve, but disagree with the solution. Or, when good things happen, we may feel guilty, as if we don't deserve them.

Here are three tips for developing your own fluency with change:

Take stock – Self-awareness is the first step to becoming more fluent in dealing with changes in our lives. Dealing with change is a matter of choice. It is choosing to be accountable to yourself for your own personal and professional development. We often cannot see how we undermine ourselves by our beliefs.

▶ Create your own list of major things that happened or that you created in your life over the last year. These can be the "good" changes as well as disappointments or losses. Note how you initially responded to the change. How did you feel? What did you think? What did you say, to whom? What did you do? How do you feel about the way you handled it? What would you do differently?

Revisit your Sense of Purpose and Perspective – Clearly define "why" you do your work. Remember the stonecutter who made square blocks of marble day after day? When asked how he tolerated such a boring job, he replied, "I'm not just making square blocks." He pointed across the field and continued, "I'm building that cathedral over there." There are many resources to help people discover their mission or purpose in life. Your organization's original mission can be a good place to start.

▶ Re-new your commitment to your personal and/or organization's mission. Then when you experience set-backs or other changes, you'll have a stronger perspective to deal with the change.

Personal/Professional Networks - People don't tend to keep up their network when they haven't had to look for a job. Your network is not just a safety net in bad times. It's a mutual exchange of ideas, support and connecting people as resources for each other. The most resilient people have a variety of personal and organizational relationships.

▶ Jump-start your network by listing people you can depend on in times of need. Now choose a name and think about what you can do for them today!